

QuickHelp

Owner's Guide

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QuickHelp Owners Manual

Welcome to QuickHelp—a complete help message system that lets you add instant pop-up help to any application.

Unlike other help programs, QuickHelp does *not* require time-consuming navigation through menus to find information—help is only one keystroke away! QuickHelp automatically operates on the word above the cursor, much like QuickBASIC 4 does with its clever help system for BASIC keywords.

Since QuickHelp is an independent RAM resident TSR program, it will work with *any* text based application and is always available to the user. Besides the ready-to-use QuickPak Professional Help Guides, you may easily create your own information files with any text editor.

Installation and operation of QuickHelp is extremely simple. To maximize use of the program, we recommend first reading this manual.

If you should experience an error or other difficulty while installing or working with QuickHelp, please refer to the last chapter of this manual.

QUICKHELP AT A GLANCE

- * Fast Pop-Up information for the word above or left of the cursor
- * Works with most text-based application programs
- * Peaceful coexistence with almost any other TSR program
- * Indexed access for fast information retrieval
- * Minimal RAM usage—occupies only 22K of DOS memory
- * User-definable hot-key
- * Customizable colors
- * User-selectable normal or reverse windows for monochrome displays
- * Accommodates 24, 43, or 50 line text modes automatically
- * Works on the help file in the current directory, so each subdirectory may contain its own help file (one for QuickPak, one for your word processor etc.)

HOW DOES QUICKHELP WORK?

There are various RAM resident programs available which add pop-up on-line guides to application programs. Unfortunately, these programs require searching through menus to find the necessary information. QuickHelp eliminates this tedious process by using the faster and easier approach introduced in Microsoft QuickBASIC 4.0. With one key stroke, information will automatically be retrieved for the word above or immediately to the left of the cursor.

Since QuickHelp is an independent RAM resident program, its use is not limited to QuickBASIC 4.0 tools. It may be used with any "well behaved" text based application, as well as at the DOS command prompt. Information may be accessed for any word which is defined in the help file of the current directory.

QuickHelp operates on CGA, EGA, VGA and Hercules text screens, and automatically adapts to 24, 43, and 50 line text modes.

If you are presently using QuickBASIC with Crescent Software's QuickPak, you will appreciate the on-line support provided by QuickHelp. Where QB4 gives you pop-up information for the BASIC keyword above the cursor, QuickHelp and the QuickPak help files do the same for all QuickPak routines. With over 300 routines available in the Crescent package, QuickHelp provides the user with real help.

All help information is contained in a file named QHELP.TXT. If there are many key words and lots of information, this file may be very large. To find information quickly, even in huge files, QuickHelp uses indexed access. This is accomplished by another file named QHELP.KEY which contains the key words and location of the text block in the information file. Much like a human searching for a specific phrase in a book, QuickHelp speeds up this process by checking the index.

Of course, QuickHelp can only display information for key words which are contained in the help files. While the correct syntax of the typed or pointed word is very important, capitalization will be ignored. For instance, if the help files contain the key word "Test", QuickHelp accepts "TEST", "test", "Test", or even "teSt" for a successful search.

To retrieve information for the word above the cursor, QuickHelp must "know" where the key word begins and where it ends. The word always starts immediately right of the first non-word character and ends immediately left of the last non-word character at the cursor. The keyword may consist of any alphanumeric characters (i.e. letters and numbers), plus the symbols ". _" which are frequently used in abbreviations and program variable names.

All other characters (including spaces, brackets and extended characters) are considered "non-word characters" and act as delimiters of the word. Brackets are considered as non-word characters, and allow isolation of the routine name from complete CALL lines of an already existing program listing. For example, QuickHelp will recognize the term "GetButtonPress" in the BASIC program line:

```
CALL GetButtonPress(X%, Y%, Button%)
```

This means that the term "test" will be accepted in the following cases:

```
this is a test
this is a test
this is a test
Call test(X, Y, Z)
CaLL test(X, Y, Z)
```

In the following cases, "test" will not be accepted as a key word:

```
test-demo_
this is a_test
```

NOTE: The "hot-key" is the key or key combination which invokes QuickHelp and starts the information search.

You are now ready to proceed with the installation of QuickHelp!

QUICKHELP INSTALLATION

Please copy the QHELP.EXE file into the directory of your choice, preferably one which is included in your current DOS PATH. Then to start the QuickHelp program, simple type:

```
QHELP
```

If you are in another directory and there is no PATH information for the directory which contains QHELP.EXE, use the DOS CD command to change the directory or use the PATH statement to create a path to that directory. This may also be done in the AUTOEXEC.BAT or another batch file.

After you press Enter, QuickHelp displays the message:

```
QuickHelp installed.
Hot-Key: ALT-F1
QuickHelp Version x.y
(c)1988 Ing.-Buero H. Zoschke, W. Germany
```

QuickHelp is now in operation and will remain so until you turn your computer off, or remove it from memory. Instructions for de-installing QuickHelp are given in the section entitled "How to Remove QuickHelp".

USING QUICKHELP

If you purchased QuickHelp together with ready-to-use information files like the QuickPak help system, your QuickHelp program disk contains two files named QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY respectively. Please copy these files into the subdirectory where you want to use them. In the case of the QuickPak help system, you should store the files in the directory where your QuickPak routines reside.

Now let's try a sample session with the QuickHelp program. If you already started QuickHelp, please change to the directory where your QuickHelp files reside. At the DOS prompt, type in a term which you know is contained as a key word in the information file. (In all QuickHelp files, the key word "Test" is present for demonstration purposes).

Don't press Enter yet. The cursor should be on or immediately to the right of the word you just typed. Now press the "hot-key", which is ALT-F1. Simply press the ALT key and F1 simultaneously. Instructions for changing the hot key will be discussed in a moment.

If QuickHelp is installed correctly, a pop-up window with information will appear on the screen. The window may be removed by pressing any key. If any problems occur, please refer to the chapter "QuickHelp messages" at the end of this manual and try again.

If the test was successful, your next step should be to try QuickHelp together with the application program you want to use.

Now, type the word or position the cursor at the word for which you desire information. Next, press the hot-key (ALT-F1). If no information has been found, the following message window will be displayed:

Sorry, no help available for this
expression.
Please check cursor position
or syntax!

In this case, either your word cannot be found in the key word file, it was typed incorrectly, or the cursor was not positioned properly (on or directly to the right of the word). You can make the message window disappear by pressing any key. Please try again after checking the word's spelling and the cursor position.

If you press the hot-key and QuickHelp does not find the QHELP.TXT file, you will receive the following message:

No help file(s) in this directory!

This message may also be removed by pressing any key. Please change the current drive and/or directory or copy QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY into the correct directory, and then try again.

If you receive only a short tone signal instead of a window, the cursor is not positioned at any word.

If QuickHelp successfully finds information on the word above the cursor, it will be displayed in a window. The top of the window frame contains the key word as it is stored in the index file QHELP.KEY.

The information window will also vanish when you press a key.

The process of displaying and removing an information window may be repeated as often and whenever you like.

HOW TO CHANGE THE HOT-KEY

QuickHelp allows you to use any other hot-key instead of ALT-F1. This is especially helpful if another program is already using the QuickHelp default hot-key or if it is easier for you to memorize another key combination. To change QuickHelp's hot-key, type the following at the DOS prompt:

QHELP KEY xx yy

Instead of 'xx', use a shift-key or shift key combination value from Table 1.

Instead of 'yy', use a code for the desired number key, letter key or function key from Table 2.

Here are some examples:

QHELP KEY 8 60 (hot-key is ALT-F2)
 QHELP KEY 0 59 (hot-key is F1 without any other keys)
 QHELP KEY 12 30 (hot-key is CTRL-ALT-A)

The hot-key may be changed any time, even if QuickHelp has already been installed. QuickHelp will report "New hot key installed!". To keep the QHELP.EXE file as short as possible, QuickHelp will not display information about the new hot key, so please remember your choice. If you start QuickHelp with your own hot-key from a batch file, you may ECHO the key combination you selected or just note it as a remark.

Value 'xx'	ALT	CTRL	SHIFT LEFT	SHIFT RIGHT
0				
1				X
2			X	
3			X	X
4		X		
5		X		X
6		X	X	
7		X	X	X
8	X			
9	X			X
10	X		X	
11	X		X	X
12	X	X		
13	X	X		X
14	X	X	X	
15	X	X	X	X

Table 1: Value 'xx' for QHELP KEY xx yy ('X' means key pressed)

Key value 'yy'			

Esc	1		
1	2		
2	3		
3	4		
4	5		
5	6		
6	7		
7	8		
8	9		
9	10		
0	11		
-	12		
+	13		
BS	14		
Tab	15		
Q	16		
W	17		
E	18		
R	19		
T	20		
Y	21		
U	22		
I	23		
O	24		
P	25		
Enter	28		
A	30		
S	31		
D	32		
F	33		
G	34		
H	35		
J	36		
K	37	F1	59
L	38	F2	60
Z	44	F3	61
X	45	F4	62
C	46	F5	63
V	47	F6	64
B	48	F7	65
N	49	F8	66
M	50	F9	67
Space	57	F10	68

Table 2: Value 'yy' for QHELP KEY xx yy. Non-standard keys and keys which could cause confusion are omitted. The values shown above are regular scan codes, however, keys not shown here may also be used as hot-keys.

CUSTOMIZING WINDOW COLORS: COLOR MONITORS

While QuickHelp defaults to white foreground and black background window colors if no parameters are given, you may use any color combination of your choice. If you have a color monitor, you may start QuickHelp at the DOS prompt like this:

```
QHELP COL fg bg
```

Instead of fg and bg, use the color values from Table 3.

Note that the color parameters may be changed at any time, even if QuickHelp has already been installed.

0	Black
1	Blue
2	Green
3	Cyan
4	Red
5	Magenta
6	Yellow
7	White
8	Gray
9	Bright Blue
10	Bright Green
11	Bright Cyan
12	Bright Red
13	Bright Magenta
14	Bright Yellow
15	Bright White

Table 3: Values 'fg' and 'bg' for QHELP COL fg bg

CUSTOMIZING WINDOW COLORS: MONOCHROME MONITORS

On monochrome monitors (and color monitors too) you may choose between normal and reverse (black on white). The default mode is white on black. To switch to the inverse window colors at the DOS prompt type:

QHELP REV

To switch to normal black and white windows type:

QHELP NRM

Please note that you may use QHELP REV and QHELP NRM any time, even if QuickHelp has already been installed.

COMBINING COMMANDS

The color and hot-key choice may be combined on one command line in any order. Here are some examples:

QHELP KEY 8 60 REV
QHELP NRM KEY 8 60
QHELP KEY 8 60 COL 7 3
QHELP COL 7 3 KEY 8 60

Note, however, that the color and hot-key options may *not* be combined with the options "QUIT", "WAIT" and "RESTART". These options are described below.

REMOVING QUICKHELP

If QHELP.EXE is the *last* resident TSR program you installed, you may remove it at any time. This would be necessary if you need to regain the RAM occupied by QuickHelp. To remove QuickHelp, at the DOS prompt type:

QHELP QUIT

IMPORTANT: QHELP.EXE must be the very last TSR program that was installed if you intend to remove it from memory later. If in doubt, or if all you want to do is deactivate QuickHelp temporarily, use QHELP WAIT instead as described below.

DISABLING QUICKHELP

If there is an incompatibility problem with other programs, you may send QuickHelp "to sleep" without removing it from memory. This allows you to restart the program later. Individual settings (hot-key and window color) will be retained. To disable QuickHelp, at the DOS prompt type:

QHELP WAIT

QuickHelp is now inactive, and the designated hot-key will be available for use by other programs.

RESTARTING QUICKHELP

If you disabled QuickHelp with the QHELP WAIT command, you may "revive" it at any time by typing the following command at the DOS prompt:

QHELP RESTART

QuickHelp will use the hot-key and window colors which were in effect before the QHELP WAIT command.

Please note that the commands QHELP WAIT and QHELP RESTART are not meant to be combined with color or hot-key parameters. If you need to alter these parameters, you must use QHELP without WAIT or RESTART as described earlier in this manual.

HINT:

Since QuickHelp works only in text screen modes, it should *not* be activated within a graphics application. To make sure that the QuickHelp hot-key will not be pressed accidentally, it is advisable to disable or remove QHELP before starting a graphics program by using QHELP QUIT or QHELP WAIT. Then you may restart QuickHelp again after leaving the graphics program.

CREATING QUICKHELP INFORMATION FILES

Beside using precompiled help files like the supplied QuickPak help system, QuickHelp also lets you create your own. Applications are limited only by your imagination. All that's required is a word processor or text editor capable of generating pure ASCII text files. The QuickHelp utility MAKEHELP.EXE will read your text file, and create the data and index files QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY needed by QHELP.EXE.

To create your own help files, simply type in your key words (in any order), together with the accompanying information that is to be displayed when QuickHelp is invoked with its hot-key.

To create the data and index files, MakeHelp needs a criterion to recognize your key words. For this reason, all key words must be preceded by the "@" character which is located above the "2" key on the top row of your keyboard. Please note that there must not be a blank space between the "@" character and the key word. Also, remember to start at the very beginning of the line.

Your key words may be up to 30 characters long. Each key word entry must be terminated by pressing Enter. On the next line, type the window information text to be used for the key word you just typed in. To display the text window with a frame, the text block for one key word may not exceed 23 lines, with a maximum line length of 78 characters. These maximum values include blank lines and leading/trailing blank characters in the lines as well. All lines of a text block must terminate with the Enter key.

The examples that follow show some typical entries for a QHELP.TXT file.

@Keyword1

This text will be displayed for the first key word. The QuickHelp text window will automatically be sized according to the longest line and the number of lines.

@Keyword2

This text will be displayed for the second key word. As you can see, the QuickHelp text window will be sized automatically based on the number of lines and length of the longest line.

@Keyword3

This text will be displayed for the third key word.

If you leave a blank line between the key word and its text block by just pressing Enter, there will also be a blank line in the window. The same is true for blank lines between the bottom of the text block and the next key word. You may also insert blank lines within the text block to form paragraphs. However, it is important that a text block does not exceed 23 lines including blank lines, and that the maximum line length does not exceed 78 characters including left and right margins.

HINT:

Many public domain programs (like the PC-SIG library) have their operating instructions on disk or may be downloaded from a bulletin board. These reference manual files may easily be set up and converted to QuickHelp files. This will provide on-line access to the information while eliminating the need for making printouts.

After you have finished creating the text file and have saved it, the file must be compiled with the supplied MakeHelp utility. To run MakeHelp to create the QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY files, start the program as follows:

MAKEHELP filename

Instead of "filename", use the file name (and the path, if necessary) of your text file. When you press Enter, MakeHelp will respond:

MAKEHELP Version 1.x (c)1988 Ing.-Buero H. Zoschke, W.-Germany

Type Info (max. 80 characters):

The program will then prompt for an input line with a maximum of 80 characters. In the compiled QHELP file, this line will be used as an identifier and may be displayed later at the DOS prompt by entering TYPE QHELP.TXT. This identifier is very important since all help files that you are creating will have the name "QHELP". The advantage of this approach is that QuickHelp will use the specific help files in each current directory with no additional input required.

An 80 character line will also permit more meaningful descriptions as compared to an 8 character file name. For example:

Jim's Help File for DOS commands
or
Composers of the 19th century

After you press Enter, MakeHelp will begin creating the files named QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY. While working, MakeHelp displays the key word in progress and the number of text lines that belong to it:

Writing: xxxxxxxxxxxx Lines = nn

When MakeHelp has finished, the DOS prompt will be displayed again. If you haven't already done so, QuickHelp may now be started, and the information files will be ready to use.

IMPORTANT:

If files named QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY are already present in the current directory, these files will be *overwritten* when using MakeHelp. This may be desirable if you want to update existing files. If this is not desirable, backup copies should first be made of the QuickHelp files, or you may change the directory, or move the old QuickHelp files to another directory.

Please note that the text file will be read by the MakeHelp utility, but not modified. Since QuickHelp files may *not* be modified once they have been compiled, we advise keeping a copy of the original text file for update purposes.

QUICKHELP ERROR AND INFORMATION MESSAGES

QuickHelp already resident!

If you have already installed and started QuickHelp, the program will prevent multiple installations. The above message appears if you attempt to start QuickHelp again with no further parameters on the command line.

Sorry, no help available for this expression.
Please check cursor position or syntax!

The word at the cursor is not in the key word list. Possible causes: The word is not in the list at all (wrong QHELP file?), the syntax is incorrect, or the cursor is not on (or directly to the right of) the word for which you desire information.

If in doubt as to whether you are using the appropriate help file, you may check the file with the TYPE command by entering TYPE QHELP.TXT.

No help file(s) in this directory! •

This message should be self-explanatory. Possible causes: Your application program changed the directory by itself, or you failed to change to the directory where your QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY files are located, or you placed them in the wrong directory.

Short beep signal without any screen message:

You will hear a short beep if you press the QuickHelp hot-key while the cursor does not point to a valid text expression. This will also happen if you press the QuickHelp hot-key while a program is in a graphics mode.

No reaction at all when pressing the hot-key:

Possible causes:
QuickHelp has been disabled with the QHELP WAIT command, or it has not been started yet. In this case, please reactivate QuickHelp with the QHELP RESTART command, or start the program by typing QHELP.

Your QuickHelp hot key may already be in use by another resident or application program. In this case, just choose another hot key with the QHELP KEY command.

An application program is directly scanning the keyboard thus bypassing the operation system. If this is true, there is no way for QuickHelp to cooperate with this program. Please consult the developer or dealer of the specific application program if you believe this may be the problem.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

Even though QuickHelp has been designed and tested for compatibility with other memory resident (TSR) programs, using more than one of these programs may occasionally cause a conflict.

A malfunction caused by the use of multiple resident programs may be fixed by changing the order of installation of these programs. If this does not help, just remove or deactivate the questionable TSR program.

ONE KNOWN INCOMPATIBILITY

QuickHelp may not be usable on the early Compaq Portable computers which use the original ROM BIOS. If the cursor is not on a valid word while the hot-key is pressed, the system will lock when QuickHelp attempts to beep. (This may be determined at the DOS prompt by just pressing the hot key).

This is not a malfunction in QuickHelp. Rather, it is a known bug in the Compaq hardware. As a solution, we have provided an alternate version of QuickHelp named NOBEEP.EXE. You may also use NoBeep if you simply prefer a silent version of the QuickHelp program.

MAKEHELP ERROR MESSAGES

Error creating help files!

Most frequent cause: You are using a floppy disk as your current drive and the diskette is write protected. Please remove the write protection tab and try again. Another cause may be that you intentionally set the "read-only" attribute for the QuickHelp files with a disk utility to protect them from being inadvertently overwritten. In this case, remove the read-only attribute from the help files, rename the files temporarily, or change the current drive and/or directory.

Error writing key file!

Error writing text file!

One of these messages will appear if there is insufficient disk space to complete the file, or if any other problems have been encountered. For example, a defective disk, an open drive door, and so forth.

Since MakeHelp terminates after displaying an error message, the program must be restarted after correcting the problem.

Parameter missing!

You started MakeHelp without supplying text source file. The correct syntax is:

MAKEHELP filename

Cannot open 'filename'!

MakeHelp could not find the text source file in the current directory or in the specified path. Please check the spelling of the spelling of the file name.

NOTE:

The QHELP.TXT and QHELP.KEY files will always be written to the current directory, even if the original text file is located in a different directory.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

Information that was not available when this manual was printed may be found in a text file named README. To view the file, enter:

TYPE README

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Berliner Straße 3
D-2306 Schoenberg, West Germany

Exclusive U.S. Distribution by
Crescent Software
11 Grandview Avenue
Stamford, CT 06905



Crescent Software

11 Grandview Avenue Stamford CT 06905 (203) 846-2500